



News Release

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Fight Back Against Arthritis *Exercise, Education Classes Offered in May*

(Salt Lake City, UT) – If you're one of the estimated 395,000 Utah adults living with arthritis, now is the time to take action. May is National Arthritis Month, and the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) Arthritis Program is teaming up with Arthritis Foundation and The Orthopedic Specialty Hospital (TOSH) to offer several free educational events.

One in every five Utah adults has arthritis, which is defined as inflammation of the joints. While it sounds simple, arthritis is very complex and strikes in more than 100 forms. The most common, osteoarthritis, is a breakdown of joint cartilage due to aging or injury. There are also systemic forms of the disease, like rheumatoid arthritis, gout and lupus, which are caused by immune system problems. All can cause discomfort and result in life changes.

But the disease is manageable, and the Arthritis Program wants to help Utahns help themselves. "The focus of our classes is teaching the public how they can manage arthritis on their own," said Program Manager Nicole Bissonette.

Arthritis patients can take advantage of a free seminar series during the week of May 21-24, starting at 6:30 p.m. each night at TOSH. Each night, specialists will discuss a different joint area - ankle/foot, hand, knee, and hip. The seminar features presentations by an arthritis resource specialist, orthopedic surgeon, physical therapist and dietitian, all of whom will also be available to answer questions. TOSH is located at 5848 S. Fashion Blvd (300 East) in Murray.

"The Utah Arthritis Program also works with area agencies to provide arthritis education opportunities year-round," said Bissonette. "And the classes are offered in both English and Spanish."

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One year-round activity is the weekly Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program, which participants like John Wickham have come to enjoy. John had been active all his life on family farms, in the Navy during World War II, and working at Kennecott Cooper as a truck driver. But as he grew older in retirement, his arthritis began to make doing the things he loved very difficult. Feeling low one day while visiting the Kearns Senior Center, Wickham decided to join Jim Serassio's Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program. And it worked.

"The classes and exercises greatly improved my life," said Wickham. "I learned how to move more easily and with less pain."

For a complete list of events and classes, visit <http://health.utah.gov/arthritis/>.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.